

SAN DIEGO COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
KEARNY MESA JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY
INSPECTION REPORT
2005

Facility Name: KEARNY MESA JUVENILE
DETENTION FACILITY (KMJDF)

Inspection Date: 6/23/2005
Last Inspection Date: 2/2/2004

Superintendent: Yvette Kleppin

Address: 2801 Meadow Lark Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

Telephone Number: (858) 694-4500
Fax (858) 694-4333

Type of Facility: Juvenile Hall

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge:
Honorable Susan Huguenor

Staff Interviewed: Pynne Cooper, Nurse Mgr, CFMG
Valerie Potrin, Psychiatric Nurse
Lisa Backer, Sr. Clinical Psychologist
Tiamoyo Sukumuc, Head Teacher

Facility Capacity: 359

Juvenile Justice Commission Chair: Chris Giordano

Commission Inspection Team:
Chris Giordano

Comments and Recommendations:

There are no major concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. It is recommended that the medical program continue to explore and establish a computerized medical record which can easily follow the wards through the system.
2. Even though the teachers have access to a COW (Computer on Wheels) and SMART Boards (electronic white boards), it is recommended that 1 to 2 computers be placed in each classroom at the Kearny Mesa facility.

AREA REVIEWED:

R= Reviewed

NR=Not Reviewed

I= Interviewed

NI – Not Interviewed

QUALITY OF LIFE

Physical Plant - R
Meals/Nutrition - R
Mental Health - R
Physical/Dental Health - R
Religious Services - R
Volunteer Involvement - R
Visiting - R

PROGRAMS

Education - R
Vocation/Employability - NR
Community Services - NR
Victim/Gang Awareness - R
Substance Abuse - R

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Minors - I
Superintendent - I
Medical/Pshyche. Staff - I
School Staff - I
Supervisor - NI
Supervision Staff (Counselors) - NI
Food Services Staff - I

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Has the facility exceeded capacity since the last inspection?

No.

Does the facility house minors under Section 601 Welfare & Institutions Code?

Yes. 601s are separated in the Intake, Booking & Release (IBR) area. This area was viewed by the Commissioner and is very separate from the remainder of the general population.

SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION INDICATE:

Number of Suicides: 0

Number of Attempted Suicides: 2

Number of Deaths from other causes: 1

Number of Escapes: 0

LOCAL INSPECTIONS

Fire Inspection: Feb. 15, 2005 (Health & Safety Code Section 13146.1)

Medical/Mental Health: Feb. 23, 2005

Environmental Health: Feb. 23, 2005

Nutritional Health: Feb. 23, 2005 (Health & Safety Code Section 101045)

Date of Last Fire Drill: June 22, 2005

SLEEPING ROOMS (Cells)

Comments:

Although the actual bed capacity is 596, a Juvenile Court order has limited capacity to 557. The Board of Corrections has placed a cap at 359 beds. Since the opening of the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility (EMJDF) in 2004, average capacity has remained well below this limit at about 270 wards. Occupancy was 264 on the day of the inspection. Increase in female wards is notable. Due to budget constraints and the opening of the East Mesa facility, Kearny Mesa is limited to 8 living units as opposed to 11 units which were open last year. The increase in female wards has resulted in closing one male unit and permanently opening an additional female unit.

STAFFING

Staff to Child Ratio: Awake and Sleeping

Ratio is compliant with standards: 1:10 awake and 1:30 sleeping.

Communication in Language Minor can Understand?

The primary language spoken by wards other than English is Spanish. Many of the correctional staff are bilingual, English/Spanish. Additionally, the facility subscribes to Interpretalk, a telephone translation service which can provide telephone translation for a wide variety of languages within 30 minutes.

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Diversity of Staff:

Staff at Kearny Mesa represent diverse ethnicities and cultures, including Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islanders, Asian, Caucasian and African-American.

Staff/Minor Interactions:

Interactions between staff and minors are generally respectful. This is expected both of staff and of the wards. This Commissioner observed correctional officers modeling respectful behavior. During staff interviews, staff referred to programs and minors in a respectful manner. Each staff person spoke about wanting what is in the best interest of the minor and identified this as common ground in their problem-solving efforts. As part of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), correctional officers are assigned small caseloads of wards and meet with them a minimum of once per week for counseling. This adds a relationship component to the discipline and day-to-day expectations. Additionally, several of the units are successfully implementing a rewards-based point system so wards can earn points.

Staff Interviews – Comments:

Yvette Klepin, Director, was well prepared for the inspection. She was highly complimentary of her staff and the teamwork involved in addressing the needs of the wards under her care. The site has undergone significant improvements under her tenure, including general refurbishment of the sleeping areas and replacement of old toilets in the rooms. The security system is being upgraded to DVR, and she is collaborating with Mental Health and Medical to introduce video conferencing which will reduce the need for wards to travel from the Juvenile Ranch Facilities to Kearny Mesa for short and uncomplicated consultation with mental or medical health experts. In general, the staff was observed to be dedicated and happy with good morale.

CONDITIONS OF GROUNDS

Lawns, Playing fields, Blacktop, Asphalt and Other:

Lawns, playing fields, blacktop and asphalt were noted to be in good repair.

EXTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

General condition, paint, roof, drains/gutters, etc.:

Exterior of the building has been well maintained.

INTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

Walls, paint, floors, drains, plumbing fixtures, air vents, windows, etc.:

The Kearny Mesa facility is an aging facility which accommodates a high volume of youths on a daily basis. On average, about 600 juvenile offenders are booked into KMJDF each month. That being said, the interior of the building is consistently maintained. The reduction in number of wards has allowed one living area at a time to be refurbished. No occupied areas in ill repair were noted during the extensive walk through.

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Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored?

All cleaning fluids and chemicals were stored in locked areas and away from wards.

Weapons Locker Location:

No weapons are allowed in the facility. Law enforcement officers who bring wards in for booking lock their weapons in the Sally Port.

Recreation/Sports Equipment:

Basketball hoops and a playing field were visible during the tour. Day rooms were large and adequate for the population. Further inspection of equipment was not conducted.

Are the hallways clear and doors propped open?

Hallways were clear. Doors are kept closed and locked.

Court Holding Area:

N/A

Sleeping rooms/dormitories:

Sleeping rooms are small with a bed, writing shelf, small sink and toilet. Toilets are being replaced. Depending on the occupancy, efforts are made to have one ward to a sleeping room. Units 200 and 400 (currently vacant) have been repainted. Units 700 and 900 have also been repainted. Unit 100 is in the process of being repainted.

Beds:

Beds in some areas are metal platform beds with a mattress. In other areas, they are wood. All beds are 12" from the floor.

Art, books, personal possessions allowed in sleeping rooms?

Paperback books and a few limited personal possessions are permitted in sleeping rooms. Personal belongings are kept in plastic boxes and stored next to or under the beds.

Graffiti Present?

No graffiti was observed during the inspection/walk-through. The Director noted that at times graffiti is present. In some units, staff is placed in charge of a certain number of rooms with wards helping to keep them clean; in these areas, graffiti is less of an issue.

Ample blankets?

Ample blankets are available to the wards.

Study Area:

Because of safety concerns, wards are not permitted to have pens or pencils outside the school room. They do not have homework. They would be able to study in their rooms or in the day room.

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Adequate Lighting?

Adequate lighting was observed in the sleeping rooms, the day rooms, and hallways.

Temperature:

Temperature was comfortable throughout the facility.

ORIENTATION OF MINORS

Are minors oriented to rules and procedures?

Each ward receives an individual copy of the rules when they are booked into the facility. Correctional officers discuss the rules with each ward as well as explaining the cover command.

Are rules and grievance procedures posted?

Rules and grievance procedures are not posted; however, grievance procedures are well defined in the rule book and each ward is given their own copy of the rules. Wards sign the form at each step of the grievance procedure and are given a copy of the entire form when the grievance is resolved. Attempts are made to resolve each grievance at the lowest possible level.

Are rules and grievance procedures understood by minors?

Minors appear to understand grievance procedures. Several grievance forms were reviewed by the Commissioner; forms documented the procedure as explained by the Director.

Minors Interviewed – Comments:

One minor female was interviewed. She was part of the work detail, setting the table for lunch. She was able to explain that being on the work crew is a privilege and how she earned the privilege. She reported feeling safe and being fairly treated. Although initially reluctant to take responsibility for any criminal activity, she did report that she has learned self control as a result of her stay thus far. She was clear that if a ward follows the rules, things go smoothly, and there are consequences for not following orders.

MEALS/NUTRITION

Kitchen – Clean; are knives and chemicals locked?

The kitchen was viewed and this inspector spoke with the kitchen manager. The kitchen was very clean; knives are kept locked and are used only by kitchen staff.

Have the youths working in the kitchen been trained?

Youths earn the privilege of working in the kitchen. They are oriented and trained by kitchen staff. They are also required to watch a training video. They are involved in clean-up activities rather than food preparations, as meals are prepared in a central kitchen off site.

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Are meals served or cafeteria style?

Food is prepared at the Sheriff Department's central kitchen and transported to the facility. Meals are served on prepared trays. Wards eat in the day room on their unit. Trays are usually prepared and set on the table when the wards enter the day room for a meal.

Are minors permitted to converse during meals?

Minors are permitted to converse during meals once food is served.

Is Staff present and supervising?

Staff is present and supervises all meals, including the preparation of the room and the distribution of the meals.

Is weekly menu prepared? Is it posted?

Weekly menus are prepared and posted on the refrigerators in the unit. If a ward requires a special diet secondary to a chronic disease such as diabetes, this is ordered through the medical clinic and the food is then prepared according to specifications in the kitchen.

Are servings ample, nutritious and appetizing?

Lunch was being served at the time of the inspection. Servings appeared generous and the meal appeared well balanced.

Are weaker youths protected from having food taken from them?

Meals are well supervised. If bullying is noted, the involved parties are separated and the perpetrator is placed in single room status.

Length of time allowed for eating?

30 minutes.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF MINORS

Appearance?

Both male and female minors appeared well groomed. They are outfitted in plain pants and t-shirts. Color of t-shirt has significance regarding status of the ward. For example, female wards wear maroon; high security wards wear orange and must be accompanied.

Showers – Frequency? Privacy maintained? Supervised by Staff? Any assault by other youth?

Wards are permitted to take showers daily. Showers are consistently supervised by staff. Some privacy is maintained with doors covering approximately shoulders to knees. No assaults by other youths were discussed during the inspection.

Condition of clothing – Does clothing fit? Is it appropriate to weather?

Clothing is loose fitting and appropriate to the weather.

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PROGRAMS

Recreation – types and amount each day:

Recreation time is provided in compliance with Title 15 requirements. Much of the programming is provided during recreation time and includes movies once per week, and letter writing time.

Exercise – Daily schedule and amount of time each day:

In accordance with Title 15 regulations, wards have one hour of physical education in the morning during their school hours and one hour in the afternoon supervised by Probation.

Access to Religious Services?

Wards that choose to participate have access to religious services. Catholic and Christian services are provided once per week at KMJDF. Additionally, the Chaplain will arrange for a visit from a minister of any denomination requested by a ward.

Medical/Mental health Services:

Medical and Mental Health services provided at KMJDF are exemplary. The contract with California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG) has been extended. CFMG continues to contract with Children's Hospital for pediatric services provided to wards age 15 or less. Wards older than 15 receive medical services through Sharp Hospital. Daytime staffing includes 1 physician, 1 Physician's Assistant, 3 LVNs and 1 RN. Night staffing includes 1 RN and 2.5 LVNs. The local nursing shortage continues to require some shifts to be filled through contract nursing. Mental Health care is provided through County Mental Health; there is a strong working relationship between medical and mental health services, characterized by consistent joint meetings at which complex cases are discussed.

Volunteer Program:

Volunteers are used in a variety of programs, including Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) groups, and religious services. Volunteers from Donovan State Prison provide presentations to the wards in an effort to motivate them to turn their lives around.

Counseling and Casework:

Some of the funding to support the wards comes from TANF, which requires ongoing casework. Correctional officers are assigned a small caseload and meet with their assigned wards a minimum of once per week. Wards can also request to speak with the Crisis Team, which is staffed with a psychologist, a clinical social worker and 4 interns from County Mental Health (CMH) who are closely supervised by the mental health team. The Director noted some wards have court orders requiring their own therapist to be placed on the visiting list, allowing them to meet with their clients during professional visiting hours. Upon release, the wards are assigned probation officers and are frequently enrolled in other programs such as Spectrum and Breaking Cycles, which provide ongoing supervision and wrap-around services.

Family Reunification Planning:

Since most wards at KMJDF are there waiting adjudication or transfer to another facility for programming, family reunification planning is not typically part of the services there.

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Substance Abuse Counseling:

Substance Abuse education and counseling is part of the program on all units. Spectrum provides drug counseling, and volunteers from NA and AA hold meetings in the units.

Victim Awareness Classes:

Victim Awareness education is part of the regular programming in all units.

Gang Awareness Classes:

Gang Awareness education is part of the daily programming in all units.

Sexual Harassment Classes:

Sexual Harassment education is presented daily. Each day, the correctional officer reads a statement defining sexual harassment and explaining what to do if a ward believes they are being sexually harassed. These allegations are taken very seriously.

Other:

Some of the units have implemented a point system which rewards the residents for positive behavior rather than deducting points for negative behavior. This program was implemented with great success at the Director's former assignment (Juvenile Ranch Facilities), and some of the correctional officers who have since transferred to KMJDF have chosen to implement the same program in their units at Kearny Mesa. The Director notes that in the units where this program is in place, unit disturbances, fights, room confinements and AWOLs have decreased significantly.

DISCIPLINE OF MINORS

Frequency and type:

Consequences for misbehavior vary from counseling to short-term room confinement (2 hours) to longer time confinement (up to 5 days). Confinement excludes school and mandatory exercise periods, but limits participation in recreational activities. More frequently, minors are required to write an essay examining their behavior and identifying alternatives to negative behavior in the future.

GRIEVANCES

Number and Type:

Director Klepin noted grievances average about 2-3 per day. Most often, grievances relate to wards stating they were treated unfairly when points were taken for misbehavior. In evaluating the grievances, most often they are minor in nature and represent situations in which the ward did not want to do what they were told to do. If the grievance is justified, the staff is made aware of the ward's feelings. Grievance process progresses from Officer to Shift Leader to Hearing Officer (who is a Shift Leader from another Unit) to Supervisor to Director with opportunity for resolution at lowest possible level. Director signs off on grievances, which are filed in booking. A copy of the grievance with resolution is kept on the unit and provided to the minor.

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TELEPHONE

Access:

Wards have, at a minimum, weekly phone privileges; they are required to call collect.

CORRESPONDENCE

Is Postage Free? Is incoming and/or outgoing mail read? Is there confidential correspondence?

Yes, postage is free. Wards' incoming mail is only read if they are on mail restriction; in those cases, correctional officers follow the proper procedure. Correspondence is confidential.

VISITING

Is there adequate space, convenient times or accommodations to parent work schedule, etc. special visits? Does staff supervise visits? Is there adequate privacy?

Adequate space is available for visiting, which usually takes place in the units. Visiting hours are reasonable to accommodate parent work schedules. Professional visits are accommodated as mentioned earlier, and private space to afford confidentiality is available for this purpose. Correctional staff sits at the desk to provide supervision during visiting. Private areas are available.

Have all minors had visits?

All minors are provided the opportunity for visitation and have visits unless they have no family or the family chooses not to come.

SCHOOL

Teachers – Number of full-time; frequency of substitutions:

The school program is year round and staffed with 20 full-time contracted teachers. Because of the year-round schedule, substitute teachers are on site most days to cover for full-time staff vacations and sick leave. The school year is 185 days.

Number of minors in school/per classroom:

The school program is administered jointly with Girls Rehabilitation Facility. About 300 students (including GRF) participate in the school program. About 250 of these students are residents of KMJDF on any given day. There are 15 classrooms with a maximum of 20 students in each room. All minors are required to attend school.

Number of Minors on independent study:

Because of their educational needs, some minors, usually ranging from 10-20 students, are placed on independent study.

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Atmosphere of classroom:

Did not observe. The Director informed the Commissioner that classrooms are orderly and well controlled. Wards generally apply themselves to the educational program as student-to-ratio is enhanced in this educational setting. Classrooms are well supervised with support of correctional officers readily available; discipline problems are rare.

Adequate Supplies? Books, paper, computers, etc.:

Supplies and books are very adequate. Teachers order whatever they need through the District and orders are generally filled within one to two weeks. Computers on Wheels (COWs) are used throughout the classrooms.

Activities and coursework:

Coursework is grade appropriate and individualized according to the needs of the students whose educational needs are individually assessed. The education program is standards based ("Power Standards") and the teachers teach to the required standards.

Are minors required to do homework?

Minors at Kearny Mesa are not permitted to have pens or pencils outside of school. Some choose to study in the common areas, but generally their academic efforts are focused within classroom time and they are not required to do homework.

Number of minors not attending. Reason?

All wards at KMJDF get educational instruction. Wards can be suspended for fighting or for threatening behavior. Staff and school personnel at the facility view education as a collaborative effort, and there is little fighting in the school setting. A student may be suspended for five days for fighting.

Relationship between the school and KMJDF staff:

The relationship between staff at Kearny Mesa and school staff is good for the most part. Leadership is supportive of the collaborative effort between school and facility staff, and both groups have worked hard at developing good communication and rapport. However, the school and facility staffs recognize that, while they share the common ground of the best interests of the minors in custody, they are two distinct entities with two distinct functions.

Describe access to school, recreation, exercise and recreation for minors confined to their rooms:

Wards who are confined to their rooms still go to school and are allowed access to supervised exercise.

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ACCESS TO MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

There is ready access to both medical and mental health services. Newly booked wards are screened at time of intake and receive a physical within 48 hours of admission. There are boxes throughout the living areas for wards to fill out a sick leave request. These are collected by nursing staff every 4 hours and are triaged for medical staff, i.e., nurse visit, physician assistant visit or M.D. visit. The medical team works closely with Public Health regarding public health issues such as STDs and positive PPDs. Wards are referred for mental health services in a variety of ways, including self referrals, referrals from probation officers, correctional officers, parents, medical team, etc. The mental health team provides crisis intervention and stabilization, which may require ongoing care during time at KMJDF. The mental health team is also available during visiting hours to allow for interaction with families of the wards. Approximately 50% of the wards take prescribed psychotropic medication which is monitored by the psychiatrist and administered by registered nurses.

/end